



The Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, has encountered severe turbulence after it emerged that he ordered a double bed to be installed on a plane that carried him and his deeply unpopular wife, Sara, to Baroness Thatcher's funeral in London last month – at a cost of \$127,000 (£83,000).

The revelation comes amid growing resentment over an austerity budget proposed by the finance minister Yair Lapid, a former TV personality who won popular support in January's election by promising to champion Israel's financially squeezed middle class. Up to 15,000 people demonstrated in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and other cities on Saturday night in an echo of the massive social justice protests that swept the country two years ago.

Following an outcry over the cost of installing a "rest chamber" on the chartered El Al flight, Netanyahu's office said that henceforth no sleeping cabins would be provided on short-haul flights to Europe.

Initially, officials defended the move – disclosed by Israel's Channel 10 on Friday evening – in a statement that was immediately mocked by commentators for its detailed account of Netanyahu's schedule.

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